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DIRECTORATE OF  
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State Department review completed

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PANAMA: The government is in the process of reviewing its position on canal negotiations.

Last week, as part of this effort, Torrijos sent his senior foreign policy adviser, Dr. Jorge Illueca, to Washington to make an independent assessment of the US position on a treaty. Ambassador Illueca reiterated Panamanian dissatisfaction with the progress of the negotiations and the need for the US to reformulate its treaty proposals to take Panamanian aspirations into account. He indicated that his government would attempt to clarify its position and issue new instructions to the Panamanian negotiating team within the next two weeks. He also stressed the desirability of a change of venue from Washington to Panama City.

Illueca's visit is yet another indication of Torrijos' lack of confidence in his own canal negotiators. It also confirms that Torrijos' decision in late February to resume the negotiations was not accompanied by a decision on strategy or a clear and detailed definition of objectives. Given this uncertainty, Illueca's optimism that such a decision is imminent may be misplaced.

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YUGOSLAVIA: Party and government bodies have postponed scheduled meetings extending into the first week of April. No explanation has been given, but the smallpox epidemic in the eastern and central part of the country may be the cause.

With only 24 hours notice, Belgrade postponed an unprecedented joint meeting--to be chaired by Tito--of the party presidium and state presidency that had been scheduled for yesterday. Meetings of the Federal Assembly on 29 March and 7 April were also postponed without explanation. Sports events and other public gatherings in the capital already have been called off because of the epidemic. Belgrade may be reluctant to convene its top officials because they would be exposed to persons from areas infected by smallpox and because Yugoslav vaccines are suspected of being ineffective. Failure to explain the postponements would be consistent with other Yugoslav attempts to minimize publicity on the epidemic.

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